

PRIMITIVE MAN

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THE FUNERAL RITES OF THE NIMAR BALAHIS

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INTRODUCTION

THE Balahis, a lower caste of weavers and day laborers in the villages of the Nimar and Hoshangabad districts of Central India (cf. Fuchs, in *Primitive Man*, 1939, 12: 71), have little fear of death. They do not think of it very often. They live entirely for the moment and do not trouble their minds too

much with thoughts of the future or of the past. They fear the evil spirits, whom they see everywhere lurking in the dark, in graveyards, in the trees, in the jungle. They fear the causes of death and sickness, but death itself much less.

Young people do not think of death; it is an affair for the old. But when it comes over them, it takes them usually all of a sudden, after a few days of intensive sickness. When their body is exhausted by a savage fever, when cholera, smallpox or other epidemics throw them down on their death-bed, there is little time to think of fear. The body is too weak for strong emotions of the mind.

Old people do think of slowly approaching death, and at times feel afraid of it. But their spirit is already broken by a life full of hardship and oppression, by suffering, starvation and sickness. Old people have seen so many of their own family die that death is a common guest in their house.

The Balahis are of a passive nature. They have been trained by the conquerors of their soil, the higher castes, to yield to oppression and force. They have been slaves, for centuries perhaps, and have the spirit of slaves. No wonder then, that they yield without much struggle to an irresistible force—death. There is no time the Balahis think more of God than when on their death-bed. "*Bhagwan ki marji!*" (It is the will of God!), they say, "It is He who gave us life and who takes it again. What can we do against Him?"

Besides that, for the Balahis death is not such a tremendously important step out of this life. For them no definitive finality exists: man is reborn after some time and can start his life anew. If this life was a failure, he has a hope that the next life will perhaps be more prosperous and successful. Death is no journey into a distant, mysterious and entirely strange country, but more a walk into another room with more or less the same environment. It is true, God punishes the wicked, casts them into a hell full of scorpions and poisonous worms. It is true, God rewards the just, taking them into His heavenly abode. But nothing is irrevocable and eternal. After some time, reward and punishment have an end and man begins his pilgrimage on earth all over again.

And then, the Balahis have little to lose in this life. They do not possess treasures and earthly comfort. They are shunned and despised by the world, cheated and ill-treated by higher castes. Death is for them a redemption from oppression and suffering, starvation and failure. Then, too, they do not feel such a strong sense of responsibility for wife and children; for other relatives will take care of them. They do not feel themselves indispensable to their family.

The Balahis are not materialists. They distinguish clearly between body and soul. The body dies and rots away, but the soul lives forever. They have many expressions for the principle of life in man: *jiw*, *pran* (life), *atma* (soul), *ruha* (spirit), *hañsa* (self); but they say that these are only different names for the same thing. The spirit of a deceased is evil and harmful, but only as long as it has not found its abode, as long as it is roaming homeless in this world, separated from its former body and not yet taken up by God or the Devil, or reborn in another body.

I. THE DAY OF DEATH AND OF FUNERAL

1. THE DEATH

When the Balahis of a village hear that one of their own caste fellows is gravely ill and that there is little hope of his recovery, they come sometimes to visit him. They squat down near the sick-bed (*palang* or *khat*) for a short time, and speak with the sick person if possible. At least they want to make him (or her) understand that they have come to visit him in his sickness. The Balahis attach great importance to such visits; they want to be visited in case of sickness; they feel a great consolation when pitied by friends and relatives in their hour of suffering. The visitors ask the sick person also whether he (or she) has something to tell them, or something to settle, and gently suggest that it would be about time now to do so. Although the Balahis are mostly very poor and have not much to bequeath in their last hour, there are almost always debts which have to be paid, or little loans of money, grain or tools that have been given to some neighbours or relatives, which have to be reclaimed. These matters have to be settled now, because after death it will be

difficult for the heirs to claim such loans, and it will be likewise difficult for creditors to get any money from the heirs. Written documents are only rarely in the hands of the creditors, and more often the heirs deny any responsibility for the debts of the deceased. They pretend to know nothing about the debt or claim that the loan has been repaid long ago. Quite the same will be maintained by debtors when the heirs come to collect the borrowed money or grain. The Balahis are very keen on making loans, but they are utterly reluctant in paying back what they owe. Death of the creditor is in their opinion a sufficient reason to consider the matter as settled.

The visitors, however, avoid giving any medical advice, fearing that the death of the sick person may eventually be attributed to their ill-advised medicine. After a short while these visitors leave and make place for others. Caste members of some reputation are never without visitors in their last sickness.

When at last death seems to approach, all the fellow-Balahis of the village are called to the house of the dying person. As many as can possibly find place in the house, enter and sit down near the death-bed. The others sit on the verandah. They do not speak much, and then only in a low voice. As soon as death seems imminent, the nearest relatives of the dying are asked to lift him from his bed and lay him down on the floor. The relatives at first are reluctant to comply with these requests, as, by doing this, they appear to abandon their last hope of his recovery. They also fear the dying man will feel offended, when they are too hasty in giving him up. But at last, when the signs of imminent death appear unmistakably on the face of the dying person, they lift him quickly up from the bed and gently place him on the ground.

The Balahis—as other Hindus—believe, that man has to die on the ground. As he was born from the womb of his mother and laid down before her on the ground, so he should lie in the lap of the Earth-mother at the moment of his death. No Balahi wants to die on his bed and nobody wishes to be guilty of letting anyone of his relatives die on a bed. This would certainly prove to be a sign of coming disaster for all relatives of the deceased. It is a general opinion that a man or woman who has died on a

bed must always carry his bed along in the next life. As such a burden certainly will be most inconvenient, the deceased will surely take revenge on his relatives who did not take proper care of him in his last hour. Only a number of expensive offerings could atone for such a crime and set free the spirit of the deceased from his troublesome burden. When Balahis quarrel, one of the worst curses is: "May nobody be present in the hour of thy death to bed thee on the ground!" Such a curse is regarded as an unforgivable insult and will create lifelong enmity.

As soon as the dying person has been placed on the floor, the women of the house begin to cry. The wife, mother and daughters of the dying man especially behave like mad. They throw themselves on the dying, call him by his name, implore him not to leave them in distress, without his protection and help. In their passionate grief and sorrow they go even so far to accuse Bhagwan, the Supreme Being, of being merciless and cruel. They curse God, whom they hold responsible for the early death of their beloved relative. They address the dying man by the dearest names, enumerate all his virtues and good deeds: if there are scarcely any to be found, they invent them. They give themselves up to their distress without restraint, tear their hair and veil, and roll on the ground. The wife or mother of the dying man especially goes often very far in her expressions of passionate grief. The other women, relatives or friends, sing their lamentations in a high and passionate voice, adding to every sentence a series of rhythmical sobs in decrescendo. After a while, when the wildest grief is over, the widow joins in these lamentations and takes even the leading part in it. She asks: "Why do you want to leave me so soon? Was I not always a hard-working and a faithful wife? Have I not given birth to a number of good and strong children? Have I not always prepared a good meal for you? Was your house not always clean and well-swept? Have I not always received you with love and friendliness, when you returned from your work? Or from a journey?" Some women are indefatigable in putting questions of this kind and the younger women listen with attention and repeat these questions with great emphasis, to imprint them forever in their mind, that they may be able to use them when their turn comes.

These mourning songs of the women sound really very distressing. But it seems also as if many a woman may find satisfaction in her unrestrained outburst of grief and sorrow. Many women find their husband a burden in good and bad days, especially in his last sickness. They even tell relatives and friends that they are tired of nursing him. But even such women are very extreme in lamentation at the moment of their husband's death. This is not always dissimulation or dishonesty, the grief is really felt, but it is roused to greater pitch voluntarily and even artificially. Often just the women who have neglected their duties in nursing their sick husbands show such a degree of grief, and onlookers scold them for their previous misbehaviour, reminding them of their negligence. Of course in case of a happy marriage and in a house with many small children, no such artificial stimulus is required. The grief of a widow is then genuine. Her fate is not at all enviable. If no children are in the house, she will soon be remarried to a second husband who perhaps will not love her as much as did the first one; if she has children, she will have to leave them in case of remarriage; or she will have great difficulty in supporting them, if she chooses to live alone and only for her children.

The men show much more restraint. At the most, the nearest relatives cry a little, they even scold the women and tell them to keep quiet and to behave decently. They ask the dying man or woman to remember their former love and friendship, to forget any offence or enmity of bygone days, to consider them always as their friends and relatives, even in the coming life, and to do them no harm. The nearest male relative lays one hand gently on the eyes and mouth of the dying person and closes them, keeping his hand on the face, till the last sigh is breathed. After the death a few moments are devoted to the sorrow of the bereaved; the men cry quietly, the women loudly and without reserve. Then an old man tries to say some words of consolation: "God has given the deceased only this certain number of days for life. It is His will to give life and to take it again. We are powerless and cannot change it. All our crying is of no avail." This is always the most convincing consolation for a Balahi in any case of loss and calamity: *Kya karna?* ("What can we do?"). The

Balahi does not grasp the whole extent of his loss at the moment, and a merciful forgetfulness gives him relief after a few days of mourning.

2. THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE FUNERAL

After a short while, all leave the room except the nearest relatives of the deceased. Some men go and prepare the bier for the funeral. They take two bamboo poles about eight feet long, and five bamboo sticks about two feet long, which they tie across the two long poles, so that the whole thing looks like a ladder. On it they put stalks of cotton or *tuar* (*Cajanus indicus*, lentil), then a kind of long silver grass, *khas*, and over it some old rags. Then they tie the whole thing up and down and across with strings—and the bier is ready. Near relatives in the house cover the deceased with a white shroud, if the deceased has been a man or boy. In case of a woman, a red cloth is used. Under this cover the corpse is undressed, a man by his male relatives, a woman by her female relatives. Sometimes the corpse is also bathed, but not always.

Then, for a man, they take a loincloth (*dhoti*), about six yards long and two yards broad. They fold it at full length two or three times, then tie this strip around the waist; one end is passed between the legs and put into the cloth on the back. Sometimes they take only a short piece of cloth, pass it between the legs and put it in front and at the back under the waist-string, which every Balahi wears from childhood on. It looks like a *languti* (short loin-cloth), which seems to be the original dress of the Balahis, although they now generally wear a *dhoti*, a broad loincloth, which reaches at least to the knees. It is said, that the Balahis in the jungle of Holcar state, westwards from the Nimar, still hold on to the *languti*, which was abandoned in the Nimar about fifty years ago. Only very few old people wear the *languti* at home; but when leaving the house, even they take a *dhoti*.

The head of the deceased is now covered with a turban (*pagri*) of a bright red colour. The turban-cloth is folded into a narrow strip and tied round the head. Even on his last journey the Balahi has to cover his head with a *pagri*, as the custom demands from a man leaving the village.

A woman is dressed in a red sari in the usual way. These clothes are of a better quality, when the deceased happens to have been of advanced age. For young people a more simple dress will be sufficient, and small children are just wrapped in a white cloth. The funeral of an old man or woman is considered a matter of rejoicing. They have lived their full life, and as their last years were full of trouble for themselves as well as for their relatives, their death is only a redemption from all pain and suffering.

After the dressing of the corpse, the survivors take a handful of *joari* flour, mix it with water, and form two small balls of it. In each hand of the deceased they lay one ball with a small silver coin (about two or four annas), and in one hand also a copper coin. This is probably travelling money for the journey which the deceased has now to undertake. Then all new cloth, which has been bought for the funeral, is put on the corpse. It often happens, that these pieces of cloth are bought in the market long before the sick person actually dies. This is an act of foresight, otherwise not to be expected from a Balahi. But in case of death the Balahi does not take any chances.

Now three or four men lift up the corpse, carry it outside, and put it down on the bier. A near relative of the deceased then takes two cocoanuts, and dividing them into halves, pierces them in the middle and passes a string through the hole. In the inner side he ties a date on the string, then the four halves are tied to the four ends of the bier.

Meanwhile the widow of the deceased—in case he was a married man, otherwise this ceremony will be omitted—dresses and puts on all the jewels and ornaments that she possesses. Thus adorned she comes out of the house, holding a small brass plate with the *panchkoka*, that is, *haldi* (turmeric, the yellow coloured root of the haldu plant, *Adina cordifolia*), *sendur* (vermilion), *abir* (a light yellow powder), *gulal* (a bright red colour) and *kuku* (a dark red colour). The men take the plate with five small heaps of these spices and rub the face of the deceased with *sendur*, *kuku* and *gulal*, till the face has a repulsive, unearthly appearance. *Abir* and *haldi* are painted over the red colour on the forehead, near the ears and on the neck of the

deceased. The rest of the spices are strewn on the cloth round the head.

Now a touching ceremony is about to take place. The widow takes leave of her husband. Adorned with all her jewels and ornaments, she approaches the bier and starts her lamentations once more. With heartrending cries she puts her hands on a plate which is covered with a paste of ground *haldi*, mixed with water. Then she presses her hands with widespread fingers on the shroud which covers her husband, on both sides of the chest, then both hands on the loins of the corpse, and at last the right hand on the navel, so that five handprints are left on the white sheet. To understand the meaning of this ceremony, one has to remember that it is custom among the Balahis to anoint the bridegroom and bride with *haldi* for four days before the marriage takes place. This ointment means to prepare their bodies for conjugal life. The handprints of the widow mean: "I return now the *haldi* with which my body was anointed for conjugal life with thee. As thou didst get a right over my body, and I over thy body, through this ointment, so I withdraw now my body from thee and give up also my right over thy body. The ties of our marriage are dissolved herewith; from now we part from each other."

The widow now begins to take off her jewels and ornaments. From her forehead she removes the *tikli*, a small round ornament of gold-paper, which is worn just between the eyebrows. She throws it on the corpse. Then she takes off her armlets of glass, *bangli*, breaks one and throws the pieces on the corpse. After that she opens one of the *bichas*, the toe-ring, the sign of a married woman, and puts it down with the other ornaments: the silver hair-dress over her forehead; the *takli*, a silver necklace in the shape of a snake; and lastly the *chuni ki gaslai*, strings of glass-pearls, sewn in four or five lines on a piece of cloth and worn around the neck only by married women. Other armlets and ankle-rings a widow may wear, but not those reserved for married women.

If the deceased leaves a widow, his face remains uncovered. If however his wife has died before him, the shroud is drawn over his face.

All these preparations for the funeral are made soon after death. The hot Indian sun does not allow delay of the funeral. Then the Balahi considers the deceased to be his natural foe, of whom he wants to get rid as soon as possible. Everybody shows great fear of the spirit of a dead person. If the death, however, happens late in the evening or in the night, these preparations for the funeral are made the next morning. But then a thick nail is driven in the ground at the head and foot of the corpse. By this they ban the spirit of the deceased to the ground, from which he cannot get up and harm the members of the family during the night.

They feel less fear if the deceased is an old man or woman. In such a case the village people come together at the house of mourning and help to pass the time by relating stories or by singing. Young people get sometimes so merry at such meetings that they are admonished by their elders to behave better. It is the joyful expectation of a great funeral banquet that makes them so merry and that induces the villagers to visit the house of mourning. But if a young man, or a woman in childbirth, dies, the worst is to be feared for the surviving relatives. The woman dying in childbirth becomes an especially malignant ghost, a *churel*, which can only be banned by special magical practices. An unmarried boy has failed to fulfil his destiny in this life and does not easily find peace in the other world.

3. THE FUNERAL PROCESSION

When all the preparations have been made and the corpse has been tied carefully with strings to the bier, four men lift the bier on their shoulders and proceed to the burial ground. As soon as the funeral procession starts, a son or younger brother of the deceased removes the *joari* balls from the hands of the corpse and puts the silver and copper coins into his own pockets. He will keep them as a remembrance of the deceased and will not part from them even in times of greatest want. He believes that with this money all the signs of love which the deceased had bestowed on him during life will remain with him and will secure the deceased's favour and assistance even for the future life.

At the head of the funeral procession goes the son or younger brother of the deceased, carrying a lighted, glowing dung-cake in

his right hand. With him goes the daughter-in-law of the deceased or any other woman of near relationship, who carries in one hand an old earthen pot (*handi*) and in the other an old broom (*bhairi*). Then follow the carriers with the bier, and after them the fellow-villagers. The carriers are scantily dressed in an old *dhoti* (loin-cloth), without a shirt or coat, the head covered with an old, ragged *pagri* (turban). The carrying of the bier and the contact with the corpse make them unclean; that is why they take care not to defile their good clothes.

The bier-carriers walk in great haste. They all but run on their way to the burial ground. If possible, they avoid the village paths in getting out of the village, even if by doing so they must make a detour.

Women and children are not allowed to accompany a funeral procession. The woman with the earthen pot and the broom goes only a few steps with them, at most as far as the village borders, where she throws both pot and broom on a rubbish heap on the way. This ceremony means that up to now the women of the family (especially the daughter-in-law!) have served the deceased by cooking his meals and cleaning his house, but that from this moment on they are set free from all their duties towards him. The other women of the family remain within the compound of the house, taking leave of the deceased with passionate expressions of grief. The Balahis say that women have to keep away from a funeral, because they cannot restrain themselves and would be too much of a disturbance to the men in the fulfillment of their last duty. But another reason is that they fear the evil influence of the deceased's spirit, which is especially threatening to women and children. This is certainly the main reason why women and children are never allowed to visit a burial ground. The Balahis believe that they may get fever through the malignant spirits who haunt the burial grounds. But the men too visit the graveyard only with great reluctance, and they will never have the courage to visit a grave on a dark night. They will never sleep near a grave when on a journey; if they get fever because they have unconsciously done so, they must offer a cock and at least one cocoanut with *kuku*, *sendur*, etc., for soothing the graveyard-ghosts.

On the way to the graveyard the men shout incessantly: "*Ram, bolo bhai, Ram!*" ("Rama! invoke Rama, brother!"). Rama is the favorite god of the Balahis, who is believed to take care of the dead. If the deceased was of great age, the funeral procession takes on a more cheerful character. A young man in woman's dress walks ahead, dancing before the procession, while a band plays merry tunes as at a marriage; the most characteristic instrument of the band is the *sing*, a horn which looks like a saxophone and which sounds like the voice of a turkey-cock. It cannot be played in consonance with other instruments, but bawls through the tunes of the other instruments, creating as much merry excitement as noise. The players are always Balahis, who are employed on such occasions as musicians even by other castes. The men sing old funeral songs, the language of which is neither pure Hindi nor the usual Nimari dialect of Hindi. An example of such songs is the following:

Jhanjario mori nao
Nadia ati gahri bahi
Alia kha auwat / hamne / dekhi
Kaliya / rahi murjhai
Kachhi kali mat toro, mori sajni
Paken deo din char
Nadia ati gahri bahi.

Life my boat
 River very deep floats
 Funeral gathering / we / have seen
 Not yet opened blossom / has faded
 Unripe blossom not cut, my Creator
 Ripen give days four
 River very deep floats.

Free translation:

Life glides away like a boat on a deep river.
 We have seen men gather around a dying man,
 A blossom, not yet wholly opened, a young man has withered
 away.

My Creator, the immature blossom do not cut,
Give it some days more for maturing.

Life glides away like a boat on a deep river.

On the way to the graveyard some relatives of the deceased throw copper coins (*dhela*) or spices (*singora*) on the corpse. After they have passed, the boys rush out of the houses and search for the coins, which may have fallen from the bier.

About half way the bier-carriers stop and put the bier down, but in such a way that the corpse does not touch the ground. They push a big stone under each of the four ends of the bier. The son or younger brother of the deceased, who carries the dungecake, tears a strip from the shroud and throws it on a bor tree (*Zyzybus jujuba*). He offers a *paisa* (*dhela*), removes the four halves of the cocoanuts and the four dates from the poles of the bier, and throws small pieces of the cocoanuts and the four dates on the bor tree; the remainder is given to the musicians. This ceremony is called *bor-chindi* and its recognized purpose is the protection of the funeral party against the malignant influence of the deceased's spirit. The rag represents the spirit, who is worshipped by offering the coin and the pieces of the cocoanuts and the dates. The Balahis believe that the haunting ghost of the deceased may be banned into the bor tree by this ceremony, so that he may not molest the men during the funeral or return to his former dwelling place to do harm to the members of his family. The *bor-chindi* is a ceremony which must never be omitted. One of the numberless curses of the Balahis runs: "May nobody on your funeral procession perform the *bor-chindi* for you!"; that is: May you die without children and relatives!

After having performed this ceremony, the carriers again take up their burden and proceed without stopping to the burial ground. This is generally a waste spot near a river or *nala* (small rivulet which goes dry in the hot season), covered with thorn-bushes. Such a spot is chosen for the burial, as the Balahis need stones, which are found in the river bed, and thorns, to protect the graves against wild animals.

4. THE BURIAL

Having arrived at the burial ground, the carriers put the bier down in the shade of a tree, with the head of the corpse pointing to the north and the face turned to the east, towards the dawn. The young man carrying the dung cake puts it down near the bier, breaks some branches from a nim tree (*Melia indica*) and squats down near the corpse to ward off the flies. The old men too sit down, a little apart, if possible in the shade of a tree, and wait till the grave is ready. The relatives and younger men of the funeral party begin meanwhile to dig the grave. But the young man with the dung cake has to make the first stroke. With a pick-axe (*kudari* or *gashti*) and hoes (*paurā*) they dig a long, narrow hole, just large enough to hold the corpse. It must be about three to five feet deep, and lie in the north-south direction. Meanwhile other men go and cut thorns, or bring stones from the river-bed.

When the grave is sufficiently deep, the men call out to bring the bier. The carriers lift up the bier and put it down beside the grave. Then they cut the strings which tie the corpse to the bier. A near relative of the deceased takes off from the corpse all the ornaments,—earrings, armlets, etc. Even the *pagri* is taken away, and the waist-string is cut and removed. The deceased has to return to mother earth as he was born from his mother's womb. Now some near relatives gently put their arms under the body of the deceased, lift him from the bier and let him down slowly into the grave. A man brings some leaves torn from a palas tree (*Butea frondosa*). The son or younger brother of the deceased, the one who has been carrying the dung cake, takes five or seven leaves, or sometimes twenty-one leaves, between his folded hands, with the stems of the leaves visible between his thumbs and forefingers. He dips the leaves into water, which has been brought along from the house, and sprinkles the water into the mouth of the deceased, five or seven or twenty-one times according to the number of leaves in his hands. He then lays the leaves around the head of the deceased. The white sheet with the five yellow hand-prints of the widow is drawn over the head of the corpse, but cut open over the mouth. The son or another near relative of the deceased puts a small piece of silver,

which he has cut from his fingerring, into the mouth of the deceased. Then he throws some handfuls of mud on the corpse. He now withdraws, while the other men approach and throw mud into the grave. At first they do this gently, and only by handfuls, but after this they take the hoes and fill about half the grave with mud. Somebody then takes a heavy stone and pitches the loose mud on it, and over it lays thorn branches. The thorns are pressed down with a layer of heavy square stones, on which the remaining mud is heaped. The grave-mound is also covered with stones. The thorns and heavy stones are necessary to prevent jackals, *bijus* (a kind of wild cat) and *adamkhora* (a kind of hyena) from digging up the grave and eating the corpse.

The bier with the rags on it is burnt on the spot. It is lighted with the glowing dung-cake which the young man brought along. The handles of the pick-axe and hoes are also taken off and put on the grave. They have been defiled by the digging of the grave and should not be used for any other work.

Before the mourning party turns to go home, everybody lays a *dhela* (*paisa*) on the grave and, folding his hands, touches the grave and then his forehead with them, saying: "Brother, thou hast now gone to the gods!" From now on the grave is considered to be the abode of a spirit (*bhut*) and is worshipped as such. When they return home, the closest relative of the deceased takes the lead. They all go first to the nearby river or *nala* and take a bath, to cleanse themselves and their clothes from the pollution of the corpse. In case there is no water in the river or *nala*, they take a bath near their well or at the house of mourning. The clothes which they have had on their bodies during the funeral must be wet through. On the way home they keep their wet clothes on the body. They do not forget to pass near the bor tree on which the strip from the shroud has been thrown on their way to the burial ground. From another tree close by every one of the party picks a leaf, takes it into his mouth and spits it out at once. By this ceremony they intend to express how bitterly they feel the death of their caste-fellow, as bitter as the taste of the bor-leaf. By spitting it out again they signify that they now break every connection with the deceased, who has departed from their community. Having done this, they all return to the house of mourning.

5. AFTER THE BURIAL

The women meanwhile continue their lamentations in the house of mourning. When the woman, who accompanied the funeral procession with the earthen pot and the broom, returns and reenters the house, the expression of passionate grief reaches its culminating point. But after that they soon calm down. Then the widow gets up, folds the cloth on which the body of her husband had been resting at the moment of death, and carries it under her right arm to the well or *nala*. All the other mourning women follow her. The widow takes a bath; the other women help her and also wash her clothes; then they themselves take a bath and wash their own clothes. When returning home they do not cover their breasts with the wet jacket; they put only their sari over the chest, and carry the jacket thrown over the shoulder. On the way from the house to the well or *nala*, during the bathing ceremony, and on the way back, they never cease to sing their dirges.

On returning home they carry a pot of water along. They stop near a bor tree. Every woman of the party takes a leaf from the tree and keeps it in her right hand. Then they all surround the waterpot and dip the corner of their sari at the same time into the water. Then they take the leaf into their mouth, and spit it out at once before the bor tree, at the same time wringing out the wet end of their sari. This ceremony is also a symbol of breaking all ties with the deceased. Then the women go on again, usually one walking behind the other, the widow or another near relative of the deceased leading.

Having arrived home, they enter the house. One woman goes and collects fresh cow-dung, with which she smears the spot where the deceased died. On the head-side she makes a small pile of *joari* (millet: *Sorghum vulgare*) flour and puts an earthen pot upside down over it. This pot must not be removed from its place until evening.

When the funeral party returns from the graveyard, the women recommence their mourning songs. After a while the singing ceases. One woman takes a large brass plate, fills it to the brim with water and places it before the door of the house. The men put the iron heads of their pick-axes and of the hoes into the

plate, probably for a bath of purification, as the tools have been polluted in the digging of the grave. Now the near relative of the deceased, who had carried the dung-cake to the burial ground, approaches and dips the big toe of his right foot into the water. After him all other men do the same. This seems to be a substitute for a bath, which however has to be taken, unless they have already bathed at the *nala*.

One man of the funeral party then goes to the village shop and buys some *gur* (cane sugar). The closest relative of the deceased takes a little bit into his mouth and spits it out at once. Then he takes a mouthful of water, gurgles and spits it out. Then he takes *gur* again, but now he eats it and then drinks water. This ceremony is repeated by the other men, and after them by the women. The woman who carried the earthen pot and the broom at the head of the funeral procession partakes of the *gur* first. This ceremony signifies that the mouth tasted bitter from chewing the bor leaf, but it tastes sweet again by eating *gur*: the mourners return to their normal life when sweet tastes sweet again.

The men now sit down quite at ease and begin to smoke. A near relative of the deceased fills the pipe (*chilam*) and pulls the first draughts; then he gives the pipe to the man on his side, who smokes it himself and passes it on to the next man. After that they all get up, men and women, and return home, where at last they change their wet clothes. Only now do they consider themselves clean again and may return to their daily work. In the house of mourning, however, no meals may be prepared this day. Neighbours or relatives cook a meal in their own house and send it over to the bereaved family. They eat the usual *joari* bread with *dal*.

In the evening of the same day, some men of the village council (*panch*) present themselves at the house of mourning. They sit down. After a while they ask a close relative of the deceased: "Brother, have you money to give a banquet to your caste-fellows?" If the man replies that he has enough money to feed the whole village, they are well satisfied. If he has not so much, they agree after a lengthy discussion that he should give a banquet at least for those who took part in the funeral.

But if the man is too poor to cover the expense for a *khana* (banquet), the other caste-fellows help him, every family contributing two or four annas. At the least the bereaved family has to distribute a certain quantity of *gur* or other sweets among the Balahis of the village. Of course, the expenses of such a *khana* depend much on the number of Balahi families in the village. If the number is small, a banquet will be given easily, but not so in a big village.

The meal in the evening of the funeral day is called *churma* (sweetmeat). It consists of wheat-bread, which after baking is pounded into crumbs in a shallow stone. *Ghi* (clarified butter) and *gur* are poured over the crumbs and well mixed. Before the *khana* starts, they take a handful of *churma* and put it down at the foot end of the spot where the deceased had been lying at the moment of death. They pour *ghi* over the *churma* and light it. As soon as the *churma* has been burnt—a sacrifice to the spirit of the deceased—they lift the pot which had been turned over the pile of *joari* flour. They examine the flour with great attention, whether it shows a special sign or the figure of a man or animal. Ants or bugs may have found their way to the flour under the pot, and, having enjoyed a good feed, may have left some signs of their presence. Some men or women with good imaginations interpret these signs: If the figure of a human being can be made out of the pile of flour, there is great joy, for in this case the deceased will be reborn in a child of the family. But if the drawing on the flour looks like a dog, cow or another animal, the interpreters assert his rebirth in a dog, cow or in another animal. If no signs can be perceived, they say, that the spirit of the deceased has gone away and will not return anymore. They are glad of it.

After this performance the people sit down for the banquet. The nearest relative of the family begins. But he and the four bier-carriers must sit apart, as they are considered still unclean. The four bier-carriers must eat from one plate, probably to avoid the pollution of too many plates. The women also, especially those who accompanied the widow to the well, partake of the banquet. This *khana*, given on the evening of the funeral day, is called *trit bhojan* (meal).

The next ten days are mourning days. Every morning, at day-break, the women of the house of mourning sing their dirges for about one hour. Sometimes also during the day, when they remember their loss. During these days the relatives of the deceased, who live in distant villages, are informed of the death, sometimes by special messengers. On Thursday, Saturday and Monday of the following week some of them come to express their sorrow and condole with the bereaved family. They perform the ceremony of eating *gur*, and spitting it out again, as a sign that every thing, even *gur*, tastes bitter in their grief. But then they take another bite of *gur* or sweets, which they swallow, as a sign that even the greatest grief must have its limits. The chief mourner of the house, the young man who carried the dung-cake to the burial ground, and the woman, his wife often, who accompanied the funeral procession with an earthen pot and a broom, both are not allowed to leave the house during these days. They have to receive the mourning guests. When such guests arrive, the women embrace each other and begin to cry and to lament, keeping their hands on each other's shoulders. One woman takes the lead; the other answers or simply repeats the refrain of the song with rhythmical sobbing. The men greet each other with more balance of mind. They say simply "Ram! Ram!" and sit down to smoke the *chilam* (pipe) and to discuss the course of sickness and death of their relative. Now they are keen on giving the most valuable suggestions, which medicines should have been applied, which *barwas* (sorcerers) and *matas* (idols) should have been approached. At last they express their sincerest conviction that their relative would not have died if they had been around at the time of his sickness. But when the deceased had lived to "his full age", they simply state that it is in no man's power to live forever in this world, that all men have to die, that this is the will of God who calls man at His will: "*Bhagwan ki marji!*" ("It was the will of Bhagwan!"). This is invariably their last word. If the visitors do not live far away, they go home after a short visit. But if they come from a great distance, they will stay till the tenth day after the funeral.

II. THE THIRD DAY AFTER THE FUNERAL

On the third day after the funeral the house of mourning is well cleaned. The floor and the walls of the house are smeared all over with cow-dung. The brass pots are taken out and thoroughly cleaned. Old earthen pots are not to be used again, but are thrown away. Then a woman sits down at the *chakki* (handmill) and grinds wheat, but only to a coarse pollard. This is boiled. In the meanwhile the members of the mourning family take a bath. Also the four carriers of the bier are called and must take a bath before the meal. This bath is called *kandhia dhona* (the bath of the shoulders). On the spot, where the corpse had lain in the house, a fire is lit. A brass plate (*arti*), with the boiled wheat-pollard (*ghaṭ*), *ghi* and *gur*, is put before the fire. The chief mourner takes a bit from these ingredients, mixes it well and throws it into the fire, saying: "This sacrifice of *ghaṭ*, *ghi* and *gur* we offer thee on the third day, as thou must be hungry and thirsty now." The Balahis believe that the spirit of the deceased now and then visits his former home and will do harm to the members of his family, unless they give him something to eat.

The young man who carried the dung-cake to the graveyard, and the four carriers of the bier now go to the burial ground. They put the grave in proper order, smearing it all over with mud and cow-dung. Then they burn a mixture of *ghaṭ*, *ghi* and *gur* on the grave. They say: "Now we perform our sacrifice. Be kind to us all. Do not harm us or our children!" They worship the grave, touching it with their folded hands. Then they go home. They again have to take a bath, to purify themselves from the polluting touch of the grave. Now all members of the deceased's family, the four carriers of the bier, sometimes also other relatives and friends, sit down to eat the *ghaṭ*.

III. THE TENTH DAY AFTER THE FUNERAL

1. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE BALAHI BRAHMAN

On the next market day within these days of mourning, the near relatives of the deceased go and buy the necessary provisions for the great funeral feast held on the tenth day after the

funeral. They meet friends and relatives at the bazar and invite them for the banquet. Also the Balahi Brahman is invited, to perform the last sacrifice for the deceased. Only those who are invited will partake of the banquet. If the deceased had many relatives, and if the expenses can be paid by his family, two hundred to five hundred or even a thousand guests may be invited.

Once I heard an old sick Balahi woman pray: "O Bhagwan, let me not die now. Wait to call me, till the harvest time has come. Then there will be money in the house and my sons will be able to give a big banquet after my death."

The more guests are invited for such a banquet, the greater is the happiness of the deceased in the other world, and the name and glory of his family in this world. On such a day the host does not spare his money. He spends it lavishly, even if he has to sell his last bullocks or all the jewels of his wife, and besides has to make a loan from the money-lender under very hard conditions. He will have to starve with his family for a whole year and be impoverished for the rest of his life for all that he spends in one day on the funeral banquet for his father or mother. But age-old custom demands it and a good Balahi considers it his most sacred duty to act according to the traditions of his caste. If one reproaches a Balahi for spending his money so inconsiderately, he answers: "My parents have done so much for me, they have given me life, have fed me, taken care of me for so many years. Now shall I do nothing in return for all this? Let it be! The money spent on this day is for the happiness of my parents, *unki mukhti ke liye*, for their redemption!" The original motive for this big banquet may have been the happiness of the deceased in the other world, but another motive also plays an important and decisive part in this lavishness: *ki apna nam bara rahe!* ("that our name may become glorious!"). The funeral banquet is made so splendid, that people may talk of it in after years.

On the ninth day after the funeral, the house of mourning is again cleaned and smeared all over with fresh cow-dung. The whole furniture, all pots and plates are carefully cleaned. Everything must be well in order when the guests arrive.

About noon of the tenth day the first guests arrive at the house of mourning. They are received by the near relatives of the deceased. The women begin to cry and to lament, especially when some prominent guests or near relatives arrive. The arrival of the Balahi Brahman is also marked by the wailings of the women. At about four o'clock all the guests have assembled. The Balahis of the village and some relatives, who have arrived early, are already busy with the preparation of the *khana*. They boil rice in huge pots, then the *dal*. It takes hours till the banquet is ready. Many men pretend to be busy with cooking, but few really work. The others sit down, shout orders, smoke the chilam, and have a good talk, while a few men sweat and work. They carry water or bring the provisions; others chop wood for fuel and do the manifold jobs required for such a banquet. The majority of the villagers watch their work with a critical eye, lending however no helping hand if it can be avoided. They squat on their heels and talk; guests arrive and are greeted; new acquaintances are made; marriage-matches are introduced; bullocks are sold or exchanged; and between all this turmoil and general disorder the funeral *khana* is prepared.

When all guests have arrived, the representative of each family of guests and villagers is called to the house of mourning. The whole crowd then proceeds to the next *nala* or river. Even guests who come late send one man to attend the following ceremonies. The chief mourner of the deceased leads the party. He carries a bamboo basket on his head, in which are *chapatie* (flat cakes of *joari* or wheat), rice, *gur* and *ghi*. He wears under his basket a strange head-dress, a cloth folded like a hood or head-cover, which is used in the rainy season and covers the head and both shoulders. With the chief mourner go the Balahi Brahman and the barber (*nai*); after them walk the other Balahis in groups of two or three.

Having arrived at the *nala* or river, the men sit down in small groups beside the water. The Balahi Brahman now begins his rites. He takes wet mud from the river-bed and forms a mound of cubical shape. On the mound, which represents a platform, he builds a *mandap* (watchhouse) in miniature with small bamboo-sticks or branches. Then he takes a lump of mud,

mixes it with water and forms ten small balls. These balls are supposed to represent the ten days on which the deceased's ghost has to stay on this earth, although separated from his body. The Brahman puts the ten mud balls into the *mandap* and ties a thread around its four corners. The nearest relative of the deceased, who as the chief mourner had carried the burning dung-cake to the graveyard, is told now to step into the water. He does so and sits down in a shallow place. A mixture of un-boiled rice and *tuar ki dal* (*Cajanus indicus*, skinned) is now prepared by the Brahman. He puts the mixture on a leaf of the palas tree (*Butea frondosa*) in nine small piles. Then he makes a rough clay image of a cow. Before it he puts some small coins, about two or four annas. On each of the nine piles he puts a *paisa*. Then he gets up, steps into the water, where the young man is sitting, and ties a string around his neck and another one around his right arm. Then he says to the young man: "Your father (or mother) used to sleep on a palang; he used to rest on an easy chair. Now give me a cow or a horse, a *dhoti* or a shirt. Every offering, which is made over to me will be given to your father (or mother) in the other world."

If the family of the deceased is well-to-do, the Brahman gets a good present, even a horse or a cow, but usually he gets only a rupee instead of the present which he had asked for. Altogether he pockets about four rupees.

Having received the money—promises are not sufficient—the Brahman takes the ten balls of mud out of the *mandap* and throws them, one after the other, into the water. After every ball thrown, he sprinkles water into the river or *nala*. This ceremony is thus to be interpreted: that the ten days of the deceased in this world are over now and he is enjoined to depart from this world. The Brahman then unties the strings on the arm and neck of the young man sitting in the water. He puts the strings on the plate, where the clay figure of the cow had been placed. The Brahman gives the plate with the cow-image and the miniature of a *mandap* into the hands of the young man in the water. He tells him that the ghost of the deceased is now about to leave this world, if he throws the figures into the water. He gets two to four annas for this good news, while the young man throws the figures far away into the water.

Now the *nai* gets ready to shave the young man in the water. Both squat down on the river bank. The *nai* cuts the hair of the man, shaves his head carefully, and also his mustache, if he has one, and his armpits. Then another man throws a sheet over both, the man opens his loincloth and the *nai* shaves also the pubic hair. When this is done, the other relatives of the deceased approach and are shaved, as they too have not shaved since the death of their relative as a sign of sorrow and grief. Then they all take a bath. After having dressed, some sheets or *dhoti* are spread on the ground, on which the men take their seats. A white new turban cloth is given to the man who was sitting in the water. He dresses himself. Then each man guest gives him about four annas. A man, the nearest relative of the widow's family, gives now a sari to the widow. The sari is called *ronsola*, when used for this purpose. The widow dresses.

Then the *nai* paints everybody's forehead with *kuku*, beginning first with the near relatives of the deceased. He is paid one *paisa* on the spot by everybody. The women are also painted with *kuku*, but by a woman. Now the bamboo basket is opened and the *chapatie* are taken out. The people all sit down. The nearest relative is served first. He gets a piece of bread, a handful of rice, a bit of *ghi* and *gur* on a big palas leaf. After him also the other guests get their share. Now the young man is directed to start eating. "Brother," they say, "you must eat first." When the young man has begun eating, they also help themselves to a good meal. When they have got enough, they wash their hands, clean their mouths and return to the village. It is about sunset now, for the performance of all these ceremonies takes much time, as they do not follow along uninterruptedly, but are broken by intervals and pauses. Sometimes the people themselves do not know how to proceed properly, especially when the Balahi Brahman is absent and another Balahi officiates in his place.

This ceremony on the river-side is a magical one to get rid of the malignant influence of the deceased's spirit. But it reminds one strangely on the *sarni* ceremony, the purification rite for an outcast, the nearest relative of the deceased taking the place of the criminal. He is not allowed to mix with other people during

these ten days, he has to sit in the water, all his hair is shaved by the *nai* as in case of the readmission of an outcaste, a purification banquet is given near the river bank,—rites similar to those of a *sarni* performance. Possibly these rites are relics of a time when the nearest relative of the deceased was made responsible for the death.

When they arrive at the house of mourning, the last touches are put on the arrangements for the great funeral banquet. But if the day is already advanced and it is getting dark, they sometimes postpone the *khana* for the next day. In such a case the guests from distant villages are served *joari*-bread or rice with *dal*, that they may not have to go fasting. The Balahi Brahman does not eat with the Balahis. Thus he often takes leave before the banquet, if he does not prefer to stay for the night to attend the singing and dancing. In this case he gets provision (*kachha saman*) to cook his own meal. The Balahi Brahman claims to belong to the Brahman caste, although other Brahmans call him a Balahi and keep away from him.

When the funeral banquet is at last ready, the *nai* calls the representatives of each family to the house of mourning. When all have arrived, the nearest relative of the deceased repeats solemnly his invitation to the banquet. Then money is collected from everybody present for liquor. The villagers give one anna each, the guests two annas. The collected money is counted. The relatives of the deceased have to make up for what is missing of the money for the necessary quantity of liquor. Some men buy at the liquor-shop as many bottles as are required for the guests. The liquor is called *chaki*. Nowadays however the Balahis often buy *gur* or *ghi* instead of liquor. Under the strong influence of the Hindus, the drinking of liquor is considered more and more a contemptible custom and is practised more on the sly. The Balahis are still heavy drinkers, when they can afford it, but they often feel ashamed of drinking in public. As a rule, however, liquor is given to the participants in the funeral banquet. The near relatives are served first. They take a mouthful, but spit it out at once. Only when drinking a second time, do they swallow the liquor at one hearty draught. They do not care for the taste of the liquor to the palate, but for its effect in their

stomach. After the relatives, the other guests drink, with the same ceremonies, not forgetting to sprinkle some drops of liquor on the earth, a tribute to the Earth-mother. After the drinking of the liquor the people are asked to sit down in a line,—the men and boys together, apart from them the womenfolk. The nearest relative of the deceased, however, withdraws and takes a bath.

Before the banquet actually begins, an offering is made to the spirit of the deceased. *Dhub*, a mixture of crumbled *joari*-bread, rice, *gur* and *ghi*, is poured into the fire on the spot where the man (or woman) died. Then only do the guests sit down to fill their stomachs nearly to bursting. It is astounding, how much a Balahi stomach can digest. Even small children sit before a huge pile of rice and *dal*, complacently patting their plump bellies at intervals. Some are said to eat nothing the previous day or to have taken a purgative, that they may be able to eat more at the banquet. Well, such a banquet is nearly the only pleasure of the Balahis, providing a welcome break into the dreary routine of their hard and joyless lives. That is why they never miss an opportunity to attend such a *khana*, whenever invited. Even fever cannot keep them away. If they do not feel well enough to partake of the meal, they sit there, and at least look at the crowd, watching attentively the arrangements and enjoying everything immensely.

The guests get plates made of big leaves of the palas tree, which are stitched together by their shafts, while the villagers often bring their own brass plates along. It is the *nai's* duty to supply the leaf-plates, for which of course he is paid. He gets usually eight annas for a hundred. The cooking party also supplies the servers. Barefooted—no Balahi may enter the lines with shoes on—they run along the lines, carrying baskets of rice and pouring on every plate till the man behind it says: "*Bas!*" (Enough!). Other servers pour *dal* with big ladles into a hole in the rice. Then comes a server, who throws a few crumbs of *gur* on the plate; another dips his fingertips into a pot of hot *ghi* and sprinkles a few drops on every plate. Flat cakes of wheat or *joari* are also served.

The guests begin to eat when everybody has been served. Children usually cannot wait so long, but begin at once, which is,

however, against Balahi etiquette. Now the relatives of the deceased, men and women, approach one after the other the lines of the guests, to perform the solemn act of salutation. They go from one guest to the other, touching with joined hands his feet or the ground before him and then their own foreheads. This ceremony is called *panw lagna* (touching of the feet). Others, even guests, get up and join them, so that often a whole procession of men and women pass through the long lines of guests in grave silence. Then all sit down and begin to eat, taking rice with the right hand, mixing it with *dal*, *gur* and *ghi*, forming a small ball, which they lift up to the mouth with three fingers. At intervals they drink water from the *lota* (brass cup) beside them. When the first plate is emptied, they may have a second helping. Every one may eat to his heart's content. It is a great shame if the guests were not to get enough. That would be worse than giving no *khana* at all!

After the meal they wash their hands, cleanse the mouth and get up. The servers come and gather the leaf-plates, which they throw on a heap somewhere out of the way. They are fed to the cattle, unless the village dogs snatch them away as their share of the banquet.

When the sun has gone down, the guests assemble at a big pole, called *kam*, from the top of which hang gaily coloured streamers. The musicians come with drums, flutes, the *sing*, and other instruments if available. But at least the drums are required, and a brass instrument consisting of two hollow shells which are beaten together and produce a high shrill sound. It is called *jhank* and helps admirably to keep time.

The singers begin the venerable old funeral songs, of which the first is a hymn in honour of Gampati, the son of Shiva-Mahadeo. These songs in an archaic, unusual and often unintelligible language depict the whole life of man from birth to death, and provide a good insight into the soul of a Balahi. They are called *mangal*: the good tidings. When the assembled men get warmed up, they rise, and, gripping one of the colorful streamers hanging from the dancing-pole, begin to dance around the pole, taking the rhythm from the beating of the drums. One good dancer, often a professional, is dressed as a woman and

often covered with plenty of jewels, which he may have brought along with him, or else have borrowed from the women of the village. The dancer in woman's dress is often also the leading singer, whose verses are repeated by the chorus. But if the dancer has a poor voice or does not know to sing at all, another man will lead the singing. The women never dance in the presence of the men, but do so apart in their own gatherings. Their tunes and dances are altogether different from the dances of the men, and they too never dance in groups, but only singly. The dancers never seem to get tired of dancing, and the singers never get tired of singing, and the audience never gets tired of watching, even till late in the night.

Sometimes the singers stop, and one of the party who knows how to interpret the old songs explains the meaning of a difficult verse. The younger people listen with attention and get at least an inkling of the great problems which their minds may not yet grasp. It is said that these funeral songs were compositions of the great religious reformer, Kabir, who was himself a weaver by caste. The songs, which are passed on from one generation to another by oral tradition only, and not in written form, have in the course of time changed in language and thought according to the country in which and caste by which they are sung. The songs breathe a high moral attitude and sing of the greatness of God and the transitoriness of the world and of human life. Their philosophical doctrines are on the whole those of Kabir.

Time passes on quickly. It is dawn when the singers cease and the dancers withdraw. They lie down somewhere in the house of a friend or relative for a short rest, covering themselves with their turban-cloth or a sheet.

3. THE PERFORMANCE OF THE BALAHİ SADHU

The relatives, however, of the deceased do not get rest even now. A new personality comes forward: the Balahi Sadhu. He is the guru, the religious teacher of the Balahis, and himself a Balahi. He arrives early enough for the banquet, although his activity is asked for only at this late moment.

A *dhoti* or sheet is spread before the house of mourning. The Sadhu puts his *deo* down on the white cloth. The *deo* is a small

brass image of Gampati-Ganesh, or of Vishnu with four arms, or of any other Hindu deity, especially worshipped by the Sadhu. He strews some *kuku* over the idol. Before it he puts some copper coins on the white cloth and offers a cocoanut. Then he draws with joari flour the *chauk* (cf. Fuchs, *Primitive Man*, 1939, 12: 80, cut), the magic sign of the Balahis, on the place before the *deo*. It resembles a double swastika. On this sign he places an earthen pot, which has been bought from the potter especially for this purpose. It is capable of holding one or two *seer* (litres) of water. But this time no water is poured into the pot. A *dewani* is put into it, that is a small earthen cup, filled with sweet-oil or *ghi* and containing a burning cotton thread. The mouth of the earthen pot is shut with a cocoanut wrapped in a red cloth. The Sadhu now takes off his *mala* (necklace of brown wooden beads, the distinguishing mark of his dignity) and hangs it round the earthen pot. He applies *kuku* to the pot. This pot is now a symbol of the soul of the deceased. The burning wick in it represents his *jiv*, his principle of life.

The relatives of the deceased assemble around the earthen pot. Also some of the leading singers are called to attend. One man paints the foreheads of the male relatives with *kuku*; a woman does this for the women. The Sadhu now takes a small coin from every one present. Then he says: "The spirit of the deceased will now leave this house. I shall drive him away. What will you give me for doing so?" A relative of the deceased offers him a rupee, or, if he is poor, only four to eight annas. The Sadhu takes the money, and tells another man to carry the pot cautiously to the next river or *nala*. The Sadhu, however, and the women do not go there, but remain at home, the women begin to cry again and sing their mourning songs. The bearer of the pot, accompanied by the male relatives and the singers, proceeds to the *nala*. There the pot is put down in the river-sand near the water. A cocoanut is offered. Then the men return home without touching the pot any more. When they arrive home, the women weep again for a little while. Afterwards they prepare *dhub*, a porridge of crumbled joari-bread mixed with *ghi*, *gur* and sugar. Five balls are made of the *dhub*, and put down before the *deo* of the Sadhu. The

singers of last night, who went with the relatives to the *nala*, take the balls and eat them. By this time it will be seven or eight o'clock in the morning.

It may appear strange that the Balahis need the assistance of the Sadhu after the ceremony which the Balahi Brahman had performed at the river, as they do not make any distinction between *jiv* (life) and *hamsa* (soul). But the performance of the Brahman is not an original Balahi custom; it has been borrowed from the Hindus. Anyhow, the Balahis do not take any chances in matters of haunting ghosts; they think it best to play safe and to take every possible precaution against the malignant influence of the deceased's spirit.

Late in the morning the guests from the distant villages get up and assemble once more before the house of their host. They propose to buy goat meat and to prepare a good *khana*. They had not been permitted to eat meat during the previous ten days of mourning. This time the guests have to cover the expenses of the meal. They buy goat meat or some chickens, salt, chilly (Indian pepper) and other spices, required for a good *khana*. Again it takes nearly the whole day till the meal is ready. The majority of the guests have already left; only near relatives remain. At about five o'clock they begin to eat. The members of the deceased's family eat first, then the guests and some villagers, who have been asked to partake. After this meal they soon go to sleep, dead-tired. But early next morning the guests get up, make their bullock-carts ready, and take leave of their relatives.

IV. AFTERWARDS

After about two weeks the relatives of the deceased have to visit all their guests. This visit is called *birani tel* and is in token of gratitude for the sympathy offered during the days of mourning.

Three or five weeks after the funeral the relatives again burn *dhub* on the spot where their relative had expired, as a last offering. With that they consider everything done to full satisfaction. The deceased henceforth will be remembered only on the day of commemoration of the ancestors at Diwali.

The funeral rites described in the preceding pages are performed only for a grown-up married man or woman,—for a woman of course with the necessary changes in certain rites. Thus a sari is used, when the corpse is dressed for the funeral. Rites which have to be performed by the widow for her husband are dropped, as, for example, the ceremony of taking leave. Other rites are observed by the daughter-in-law, or by a daughter or younger sister of the deceased woman if there is no daughter-in-law in the house. But all the essential rites are the same. A child or even a young married man or woman is not mourned with full rites; only the ceremonies of the funeral and of the third day are fully performed. For babies the funeral rites are very simple. No ceremonies are performed on the third and tenth day, nor are sacrifices offered.

But often even for grown-up persons, not all of the rites we have described are observed. Especially as regards the poor, they cannot afford to invite the Balahi Brahman or the Sadhu. In this case any other man may function in their place,—naturally, with less exactness and skill. But the banquet on the tenth day after the funeral is very seldom dispensed with. If however the time is inconvenient (in the rainy season) or the required money is not at hand, the relatives give a small meal to the villagers only and promise a big banquet the next year after the harvest. Sometimes this banquet is postponed for two or three years.

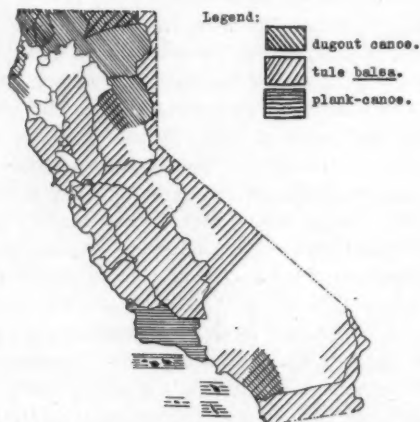
All the funeral rites, except the big banquet on the tenth day and the gifts made to the Brahman, show little concern for the welfare of the deceased's spirit in the other world. They are performed more to protect the living relatives from any evil influence of the deceased's ghost. Even the sacrifice offered for the dead at his grave or in the house at the spot where he died, is offered, not to make the deceased's spirit happy in another life, but to appease him and to prevent him from doing evil. It seems, that the fate of the soul, after death does not very seriously engage the Balahi's thoughts. The idea that the big banquet has an influence on the happiness of the deceased in the life thereafter, is vague and confused. The Balahis do not know in what this happiness consists. They do not know and do not seek to know.

THE FRAMELESS PLANK CANOE OF THE CALIFORNIA COAST

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IN a recent article, *The Plank Canoe of the Santa Barbara Region, California*,¹ I attempted to bring together all the available information on this unusual type of boat. Little is actually known concerning it, with the exception of occasional archaeological fragments excavated from old village and burial sites, and passing references in the early historical accounts. These fragmentary data I have attempted to combine and analyze into as complete a picture as possible.



MAP 1. Distribution of types of native Californian boats

The Pacific Coast is primarily an area of dugout canoes or reed *balsas*, the means of propulsion being either by the single- or double-bladed paddle in deep water, or by pushing with a long pole in shallow waters. The accompanying map shows the

¹ *Ethnological Studies* 7: 193-227, 1938. Gothenburg, Ethnogr. Museum. I should like to express my appreciation to Dr. A. L. Kroeber, Mr. E. W. Gifford and Dr. Philip Drucker, all of whom have been good enough to discuss the problems of the Chumash canoe with me.

Californian distribution of the three basic types of boats used in the area; the dugout, rush balsa and plank canoe.² The northwestern canoes were eminently suited to and developed for river travel, but were frequently used along the coast for

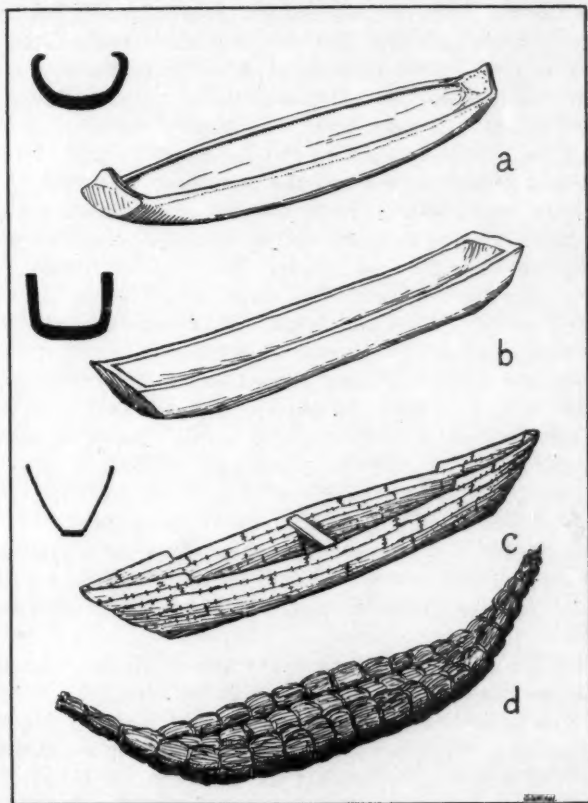


FIG. 1. Boat types of native California (not to scale)

a. Yurok (northwestern California) river canoe; b. Klamath (north-eastern California) canoe; c. Chumash plank-canoe; d. tule balsa.

² See Kroeber, 1925: 812-813 for a general description of native Californian boats.

short trips to offshore islands. They are blunt-nosed, while the Chumash plank canoe has a sharp prow. Fig. 1*a*. shows a northwestern (Yurok) canoe; the square-ended, or shovel-nosed boat of northeastern California is shown in fig. 1*b*.

In the restricted Santa Barbara area with its relatively sheltered mainland strip and offshore island chain lived the Chumash Indians whose livelihood depended on the sea. Their whole culture was oriented seawards; the rough, mountainous hinterland seems to have been little used by the coast dwellers except for occasional hunting expeditions. The high development of material culture and the occurrence of a highly concentrated population in large villages are features partially explainable by the presence of these seaworthy canoes which assured an adequate food supply. The Channel Islands lying a few miles off the coast were easily accessible to a coastal people possessed of seagoing boats. It is probable that the insular settlement and the interchange of ideas and trade materials between the island-mainland areas may in large part be explained in terms of facile, safe conduct by means of these craft. The Chumash are now extinct, and in the absence of modern ethnographic investigation it remains the problem of the ethnologist, archaeologist and historian to work together in the attempt to learn as much as possible about this highly important native group.³ For this reason, and because the plank canoe was such an important item in this vanished culture, any light we may be able to throw upon its origin and development is of value.

It has been of much interest to note Mr. J. Hornell's excellent papers on plank-built boats.⁴ In his latest article, Mr. Hornell has come to the conclusion that there are at least four types of planked boats which have had independent origins and development. In form and technology, the Chumash plank-built boat does not fit exactly with any of Hornell's four types, although it comes quite near one particular form (type C). The Chumash canoe is definitely not clinker-or clench-built (type A), since

³ For a description of the Chumash, see Kroeber, 1925, 550-568.

⁴ Hornell, 1934, 1939.

it lacks frames. For this same reason it cannot be considered as carvel-built (type B), yet the planks meet edge to edge and do not overlap. Hornell has indicated the evolution, in Ancient Egypt, of frameless river craft (type C) out of the papyrus raft. Mr. Hornell's type D plank-built boat is exemplified by the Chinese junk and sampan. In this boat no frames or ribs, as such, are used. Instead, the boat is strengthened by transverse bulkheads. The Chinese junk design is derived from the bamboo raft used on the Formosan coasts. The postulated origins and developments of Hornell's type C and D plank-built boats are roughly similar since both have been derived from a flexible raft form. There is no recorded evidence of the use of bulkheads to strengthen the Californian plank canoe.

To discuss further the comparison of the Californian plank-boat and Mr. Hornell's type C frameless river-craft of Ancient Egypt, we may note the following points. Both the Californian and Egyptian boats lacked floor timbers to which the bottom planking might be attached; ribs or frames were not used in either; and in both craft the planking was laid edge to edge. It is suggested that the Egyptian method of boat construction was evolved by craftsmen who were land carpenters and masons, men whose trade was making boxes, etc. As evidence of this are described the woodworking techniques of mortises, tenons, dovetails and struts so common in Ancient Egypt, and transferred to boat construction. There are numerous thwarts with their ends mortised into the hull below the gunwale.

These techniques are not in evidence in the Chumash craft; instead, the short, rectangular planks were attached to each other on both sides and ends by stout fiber lashings through drilled holes. At each joint, and in the lashing holes was applied asphalt (bitumen) which occurred in great abundance in surface and submarine seeps in the vicinity. It is my impression that this type of boat would have been impossible to construct without the liberal use of this asphalt as a caulking material. As stated before, there were no ribs in this boat; we can be quite certain of this, since the early observers noted this point specifically. The only side to side strengthening seems to have been performed by a single center thwart which was attached to

the hull (presumably by sewing through drilled holes) either at the top edge or below the gunwale. On first impression this would seem to be insufficient, yet the facts are such. Upon reflection we may visualize these lightweight canoes as quite flexible, being based principally upon a bottom plank, bow-post and stern-post to which was attached the planking by the method described above. The weight of the paddlers in the bottom of the canoe would tend to draw the gunwales together and tighten the sewed seams. To draw a rough analogy, it would be like reclining in a hammock where the weight of a person tends to draw the sides together.⁵

I should like to call attention to the fact that in the Santa Barbara area of California, as well as in Ancient Egypt, there was a well-developed woodworking complex, notable in which was the splitting-out of planks with whalebone wedges from large driftwood logs, and the use of these planks or boards for making various implements, sewed-boxes, etc. The unusual form of the California plank boat is somewhat similar to that of the pointed rush *balsa* with raised ends. However, most canoes are higher at the ends than in the middle, so the high-ended Chumash boat may merely be a result of a particular device or technique to meet this situation.

One further point of agreement is of an environmental nature: in both regions these frameless craft were developed and used in relatively still, calm waters. Obviously, frameless craft do not invariably develop in response to calm waters, but in the sheltered Santa Barbara channel and the calm Nile they have apparently done so. The frameless nature of the Chumash boat was undoubtedly a potent factor working against its wider diffusion; by its very nature it indicates itself as developed in relation to the local Santa Barbara channel area where it is in close harmony with the environmental conditions. The Northern Chumash, living on a rough, unprotected seacoast, found it

⁵ Three or four people were generally observed to travel in these boats. Two men, kneeling in the bow and stern (the strongest parts of the canoe) wielding their double-bladed paddles, and a small boy in the middle to bail out such water as the canoe might make seems to indicate their relatively slight constructional strength notwithstanding their size.

impossible to use the plank canoe which they undoubtedly knew of and envied.⁶

We lack evidence that the Chumash plank-boat was derived from outside (e.g., by trans-Pacific drift),⁷ or is an outgrowth of an hypothetically antecedent dugout form, or was evolved from the technologically dissimilar tule *balsa* which was, however, morphologically alike in one respect. This common feature is, of course, the form with low gunwales and high ends. Fig. 1*d* shows a Californian tule *balsa* which may be compared to the illustration of the Chumash plank in fig. 1*c*.⁸ I had indepen-

⁶ An additional parallel could be called to the reader's attention. J. M. Cooper (1917: 29-30, 43, 195-204) has shown that on the Chilean coast where the *dalca* (a native, plank-built boat) is found, the environmental (archipelagic) and cultural (woodworking) conditions are roughly like those of the Santa Barbara region. The Chilean plank boat underwent an extensive southward diffusion from its original, restricted locale in historic times; the Santa Barbara plank canoe did not, so far as we know. This point is of some theoretical interest, for it suggests a type of problem: that of the "comparative diffusibility" of two similar cultural elements operating in similar environments.

⁷ There have been a great number of papers written on the subject of trans-Pacific culture influences on the Northwest coast of North America. They are, for the most part, unconvincing. Long ago Brooks (1876) collected all the available references to wrecked or derelict ships in the North Pacific Ocean. Rickard (1939) has recently developed one aspect of this problem, and demonstrates that the southeast Alaskan and Northwest Coast natives used iron before actual contact times. This iron was gotten from wrecked ships. This whole problem is highly complex, but an extremely important one. For immediate purposes, we can point to parallels between the Southern California-Oceanian areas such as curved shell fish-hooks (Woodward, 1930), wood-sewing technique (Burrows, 1938: 99-100, 36; Heizer, 1938: 209-211), an elaborate mythology among the Luiseno similar to the Polynesian cosmogony (Kroeber, 1923: 397). I should say that up to the present time no one has succeeded in proving Oceanian-Northwest Pacific littoral cultural connections: the problem of proof or disproof still remains, and all we have is an ever-increasing amount of uncritically analyzed data which have the sole status of interesting possibilities.

⁸ I have thought it worthwhile to show a series of steatite canoe models (Fig. 2) which approximate the form of the plank canoes. These are from archaeological sites in the Santa Barbara area. Figs., 2*a*, 2*d* might easily, on account of their blunt ends and flattened interior bottom, be taken for

dently, before I was acquainted with Mr. Hornell's papers, suggested that the form of the Californian plank boat is reminiscent of the tule raft or *balsa* which is composed of bundles of rushes (*Scirpus lacustris*) lashed together.⁹ This suggests a development parallel to that proposed by Hornell for the Ancient Egyptian vessels. Even though we may see a general resemblance in the outward form of these two types of boats, it is difficult to see how the transference from one material (bundles of reeds) to the other (wooden planks) might have occurred.¹⁰ The *balsa* has no ribs, since it is merely composed of several long, flexible bundles of reeds tied or sewed together.¹¹ Thus, if this raft form were the prototype of the plank boat,¹² it is significant that the plank boat also lacks frames. This argu-

dugout canoe models. They may well be, but there is no way of proving it. These stone canoe models should not be taken as literal copies or exact miniatures.

⁹ Heizer, 1938: 221.

¹⁰ This strikes me as the single most difficult point to be met, and as a definite weakness in Mr. Hornell's proposed evolution of the Chinese junk and sampan out of the Formosan coast type of bamboo raft. I admit the logical possibility of such evolutionary developments, but reserve agreement on them until they can be demonstrated by *practical*, i.e., objective, means. In a great many cases we must accept inferential proofs as our best substitute for those of the objective type where the necessary data are lacking. Thus, historical reconstructions can never rise above the status of inferential proofs with varying degrees of probability. Mr. Hornell has attempted to answer this problem (1939: 44). But his example is not, as I see it, "an analogous change from a simple raft to a craft of incipient boat form," since the original materials (i.e. logs) are merely being modified. The original three-log catamaran forms the hull, and the plank side-strakes serve to raise the sides. The analogy, in the case of the latter feature, would seem to be as much with the evolutionary process in the development of carvel- and clinker-built boats with vestigial dugout hulls and added side-strakes, as with his Ancient Egyptian river craft example.

¹¹ This is a general statement which needs some qualification. Some Californian *balsas* were apparently "pinned" together with thin poles of willow. These pins or skewers served primarily to attach the bundles together. I do not think they can be considered as incipient frames or ribs.

¹² I have previously shown (Heizer, 1938: 216-217) that there is reason to believe that the *balsa* is an older element in California than the plank canoe.

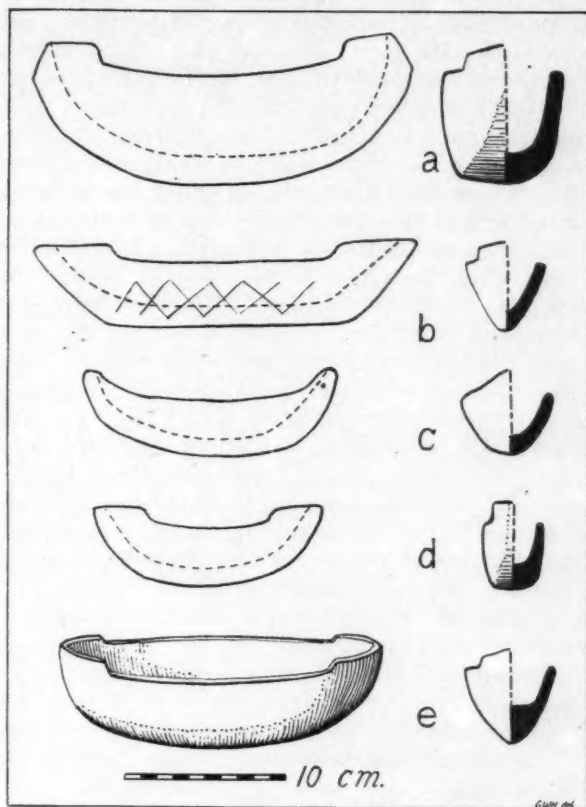


FIG. 2. Double-ended canoe models of stone (Southern California)

- a. canoe model with flattish bottom continuing into blunt bows
- b. canoe model with sharp bows and incised decoration on exterior
- c. canoe model with rounded, moderately sharp bows; d. like a
- e. like b except for incised-line decoration

NOTE: a-d (left), diagrammatic side-profiles; e. (left), a specimen in perspective; a-e (right), diagrammatic representation respectively of bow-on view and cross-section amidships

ment, however, might also hold in support of an hypothetical derivation of the plank boat from some sort of dugout progenitor,¹³ since the Californian dugout also lacks ribs. The problem thus must still remain unsolved, although Mr. Hornell's case for the evolution of the frameless river-craft of Ancient Egypt from the papyrus raft shows that such an evolution has probably occurred at least once. It may well be that there has been a parallel development in California, though this view should be entertained as only one of several possibilities.

In conclusion, we find that there is no single pre-existent boat form from which the Chumash canoe can be shown to have evolved. The multiple foundation (bow-post, bottom-plank, and stern-post) cannot be considered a vestigial dugout hull. The lines of the canoe may have been copied from its probable antecessor, the tule *balsa* with raised ends, or may have been developed to prevent swamping in the surf. There is good reason to believe that the plank canoe was autochthonous to the Santa Barbara channel region, since it was eminently suited to the environmental conditions and seacoast economy. The technological features of this unique boat (general bias toward wood-working, liberal use of asphalt, use of split planks, wood-sewing technique, etc.) were deep-rooted features of Chumash culture. It would seem that the plank-boat is essentially a synthesis of these features into what we might call the "plank-canoe complex." The origin of the plank canoe complex is understandable as a secondary invention—a recombination of certain technologic concepts—made by craftsmen whose efforts were directed toward the most efficient exploitation of their specialized long-shore environment.

¹³ The dugout is used by the coastal Luiseno to the south of the Chumash. Aside from a single late historical reference of doubtful interpretation (see Heizer, 1938: 201-202) there is no evidence of the dugout in the Santa Barbara channel region.

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SOME ANTHROPOLOGICAL PUBLICATIONS OF 1939-1940

JOHN M. COOPER

THE publications listed and briefly commented on below are a selection from the anthropological output of 1939-1940. They have been selected in view of the needs of colleges giving some undergraduate work in anthropology and of readers interested but not professionally engaged in the field. For fuller technical lists the current numbers of such periodicals as *The American Anthropologist*, *Anthropos*, *Ethnologischer Anzeiger*, *American Antiquity*, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, and *L'Anthropologie* should be consulted.

Melville J. Herskovits, *The Economic Life of Primitive Peoples*, Knopf, N. Y.-London, 1940, pp. 492+xxviii, (\$4.50), gives us an invaluable and much needed introduction to the field,—descriptive, with historical interpretation held to a minimum, well-ordered, utilizing our rapidly accumulating newer source literature.

Wilson D. Wallis, *Religion in Primitive Society*, Crofts, N. Y., 1939, pp. 388, (\$3.50), follows an older type of descriptive treatment, with abundance of illustrative data drawn from civilized and primitive religions of both hemispheres. Theoretic discussions are largely omitted. In the final chapter, he departs from scientific anthropological tradition to interpolate a philosophical apologia for human non-survival after death.

The new enlarged edition of Robert H. Lowie, *An Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*, Farrar and Rinehart, N. Y., 1940, pp. 584, (\$3.50), contains over 200 pages of new material which very greatly enhances the value of this standard text: two excellent chapters on Language and Theory of Culture, and ten chapters giving well-rounded sketches of the total pattern of as many selected cultures, ranging from marginal Fuegians and Canella to our own Western civilization.

In Franz Boas, *Race, Language and Culture*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1940, pp. 647, (\$5.00), are gathered together and reprinted a selected sampling of 63 papers by the man who during a half century has, more than any other individual, influenced the course

of anthropology in the United States. The papers run through almost the whole range of anthropological science, from somatology to art.

In the field of acculturation, a or the outstanding publication of 1940 is Ralph Linton, ed., and others, *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, Appleton-Century, N. Y.-Chi., pp. 530, (\$4.00), with sections on the Ute, White Knife Shoshoni, Fox, Puyallup, Carrier, Arapaho, and San Ildefonso, and a general discussion by Linton in the final three chapters.

Two splendid studies on woman by women, that appeared in 1939, are indications that woman, both as student and as studied, is more and more coming into her own anthropologically: Soeur Marie-André du Sacré-Coeur, *La femme noire en Afrique occidentale*, Payot, Paris, pp. 278, a remarkably penetrating study of the familial, economic, political, and religious life and status of women among eleven tribes of West Africa by a nun who knows them well from long years of intimate and sympathetic contact with them; Silvia Leith-Ross, *African Women: A Study of the Ibo of Nigeria*, Faber and Faber, London, pp. 367, (15 sh.), written likewise from many years of close personal association and observation.

Some of the more significant additions to American Indian ethnology are the following. The *Maya and their Neighbors*, ed. by Hay, Linton, Lothrop, Shapiro, and Vaillant, Appleton-Century, N. Y., 1940, pp. 606, (\$6.00), with 34 chapters by leading specialists, covering race, environment, archaeology and ethnology of the Mayas and their neighbors to the north and south,—a work destined to be a classic source for long to come. The price is a little high in view of library budget limitations, but very low in view of quantity as well as quality of content.

A. L. Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America*, University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology, vol. 38, Univ. of Calif. Press, Berkeley, 1939, pp. 242, 28 maps, (\$3.00), reopens the very large question of the relation of the native cultures of North America to their respective environments and examines the historic relations of the culture areas or geographical units of cultures,—an extremely important contribution to general North American

ethnology. Clark Wissler, *Indians of the United States: Four Centuries of their History and Culture*, Doubleday Doran, N. Y., 1940, pp. 319, (\$3.75),—this opening volume of the American Museum of Natural History Science Series is written for the general reader by one of our most experienced, sympathetic, and discriminating authorities in the field, to give an understanding both of the history of the Indian and of his manner of life and thought, to present the Indian as a fellow human being. *Essays in Historical Anthropology in North America*, Published in Honor of John R. Swanton, Smithsonian Miscellaneous Collections, vol. 100, Washington, 1940, pp. 600, (\$2.00), contains in addition to an appraisal by Kroeber of the unique contributions of Swanton to American anthropology, a group of essays, by members of the Smithsonian staff, giving surveys of the present state of our knowledge regarding a number of important phases of the physical anthropology, archaeology, and ethnology of the North American Indian.

Among a considerable number of tribal monographs on the American Indian that have appeared in the last two years, it is difficult to single out particular ones. Perhaps two that would be of more general interest are: Frank G. Speck, *Penobscot Man: The Life History of a Forest Tribe in Maine*, Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, Phila., 1940, pp. 325, (\$4.00), a thorough and sympathetic study by the man who knows them best; Curt Nimuendajú, *The Apinayé*, Catholic University of America Anthropological Series No. 8, Washington, 1939, pp. 189, (\$2.50), a field study of this very primitive Gê-speaking tribe of eastern Brazil, an addition to our extremely meager list of satisfactory tribal monographs from South America.

For those interested in Indian art, George C. Vaillant, *Indian Arts of North America*, Harper, 1939, pp. 63 (of text), 96 full-page plates, (\$5.00), selects, so to speak, the cream of the artistic attainments of the North American Indians. The plates are superb.

Two recent studies of rural life in the Far East are well worth while: John F. Embree, *Suye Mura: A Japanese Village*, University of Chicago Press, Chi., 1939, pp. 354, (\$3.00), the first close-up of Japanese rural life in English, from firsthand study

of the social, economic, and religious culture of a Japanese village; Hsiao-Tung Fei, *Peasant Life in China: A Field Study of Country Life in the Yangtze Valley*, Routledge, London, 1939, pp. 300, (12 sh. 6 d.), a descriptive account of the system of consumption, production, distribution and exchange of wealth in a village in eastern China, since destroyed by the Japanese.

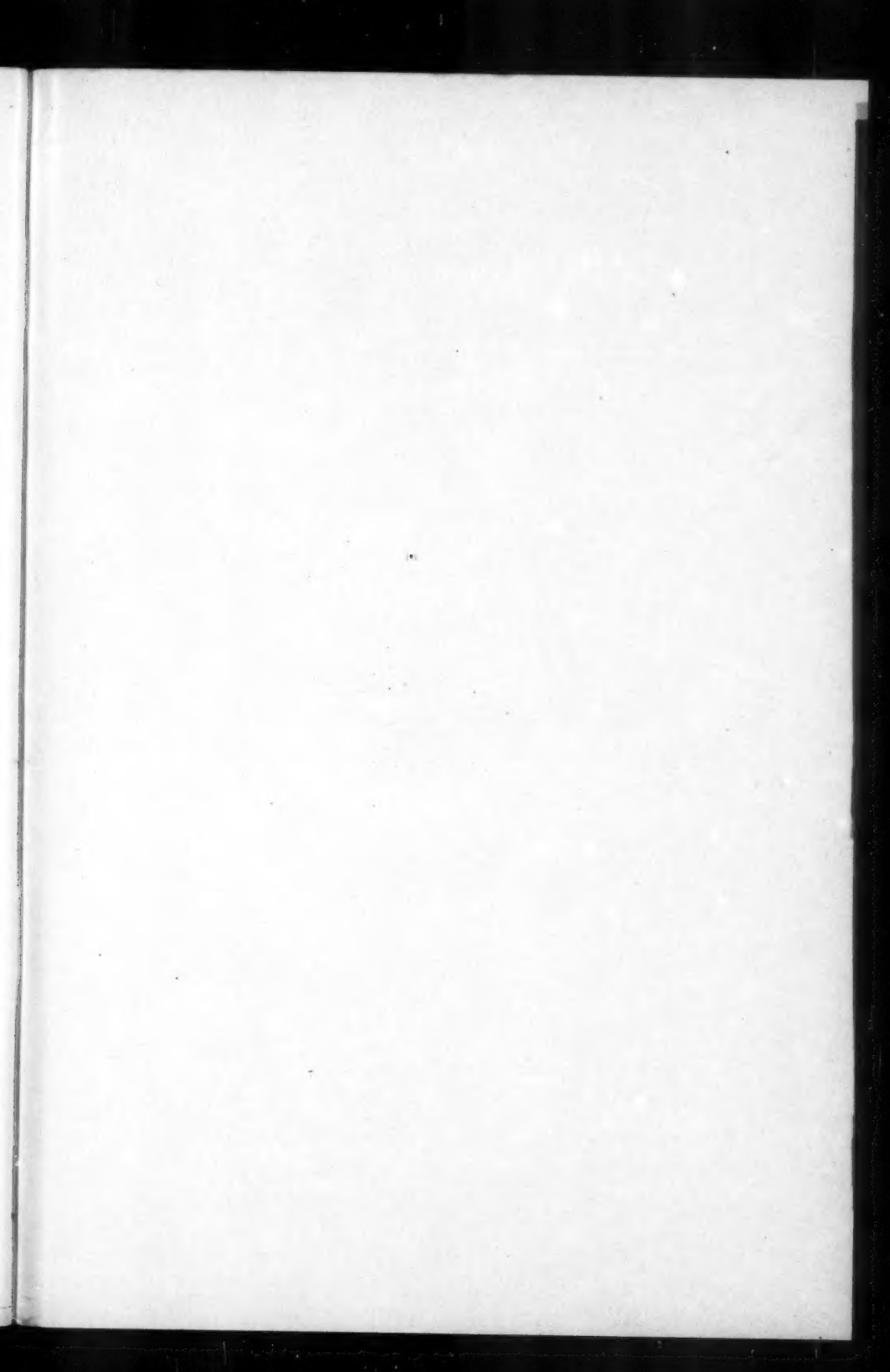
Three of the more important works in the field of physical anthropology are: H. L. Shapiro, *Migration and Environment*, Oxford University Press, London-N. Y.-Toronto, 1939, pp. 594, (\$7.50), presenting evidence of physical differences between Japanese immigrants to Hawaii and their Hawaiian-born children; Carleton S. Coon, *The Races of Europe*, Macmillan, N. Y., 1939, pp. 739, (\$7.00), a college text in the physical anthropology of the white race, with main emphasis on the racial identification and classification of living white peoples; E. A. Hooton, *Crime and the Man*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1939, pp. 403, (\$3.75), presentation for the general reader of a twelve-year study of the relation between anti-social conduct of criminals and their physical characteristics, with typical Hootonesque illustrations,—conclusions at present under heavy fire.

The second, revised and much enlarged edition of the *International Directory of Anthropologists*, National Research Council, Wash., D.C., 1940, pp. 443, (\$2.00), is an indispensable reference work on who's who in anthropology, for which we are all indebted to its author and editor, Mrs. Marion Hale Britten.

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* The following abbreviations are used in index: SRI, Spanish River Indians; ESA, Eta-Semang-Andamanese; ES, Eta-Semang; B, Balahi.



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